

FAREWELL, OLD YEAR.

Among the years nineteen hundred and eight is not without distinction. Calamities there have been, and none greater than the awful destruction of human lives in Southern Italy in the last week of the year. Sad examples of crime and displays of vice and immorality, sometimes among the classes who enjoy privilege and opportunity, have told the old story of human depravity, and the universal need of the divine grace which alone can new create.

But the year has been more happily noted by events of worldwide interest, that serve to promote peace and good will among men. Marked progress has been made in aerial navigation. The world has been circumnavigated by the American fleet of sixteen warships, on no errand of war, but in the interest of peace, and welcomed in every port, the peaceful visitation has helped to bind the nations in bonds of good will. The relations of the United States and Japan have been restored in harmony by new treaties and understandings. In great China the old regime has passed away with the death of the ineffective emperor and the more vigorous old empress, her ruler and her empire rules. Without any violent tumult or protest a new administration with a child emperor and a strong and somewhat progressive regent, the Prince Chung, has taken up the reins of government. The door is opened wider than ever for all the blessings of the Gospel and a Christian civilization. The return to China by the Washington government of a good portion of the indemnity paid for losses in the Boxer Rebellion has been an act worthy of an enlightened and Christian people, and is a witness of good intent that will do much to cultivate good feeling and confidence.

At home we have had a large development of the work of education. We have had a great Congress for the protection and deliverance of the people from the scourge of tuberculosis. The medical profession has given itself with great ardor to schemes that look to the prevention of disease, and the health of the whole people.

In ecclesiastical matters the Anglican Congress in London attracted universal attention. In the latter part of the year the Council in Philadelphia making a Federation of the Churches of Christ in America was an event of significance, expressing the unity of the Spirit and weaving the bonds of peace about the evangelical Churches.

The Laymen's Missionary Movement has accomplished a great end, awakening the men of the Church to a deeper interest and a far more generous devotion to the great cause of evangelizing the nations. The response of multitudes in many widely separated sections of our country to the preaching of the gospel of God's grace by the evangelists has been most encouraging. The old facts and truths of the Gospel have been declared by faithful men, and have found the same reception in the hearts of them that hear that they have ever had since the days of Christ and his apostles.

With many and great evils confronting us we are more than ever confident of the triumph of the truth,

and the coming of the kingdom in all the world. The old year sends us into the new with a stronger faith and a more confident hope. God speed the day when every knee shall bow!

NUMERICAL RESPONSIBILITY.

They tell us that the direct responsibility of our church is for 25,000,000 heathen souls. Who knows? Who has the right to say that the providence of God has assigned to us that exact number? Who can tell that we should provide for either as many or as few as that? "The General Assembly said so." Suppose it did; it was but voicing some one's suggestion or thought on the subject. Legislation cannot make such an estimate. If the numerical responsibility is so precise and so well defined, it may be naturally expected that the exact location as well of those for whom we are responsible can be determined. But is it?

The truth of the matter is that there is a certain "catchiness" in putting things this way, and beyond this there is little else. It appeals to the imagination more than to the reason or the heart. When one comes to think seriously of it the difficulties of definitely locating the responsibility are too serious to be overcome. The danger is that in the disappointment in realization the fancy will swing the other way and more harm than good will come. It is inconceivable that God would fix a definite responsibility and then fail to make it clear and accurate as to territory or peoples.

Some tell us that this numerical responsibility method appeals to business men, that it is practical and common sense, that it solves the problem of duty and fixes at least the minimum limits. This assurance comes mainly from the inventors and advocates of the numerical scheme. They have perhaps not heard much of the judgment of many of those who look upon it as impracticable and chimerical.

The measure of the Church's duty and of Christian responsibility and activity is no more to be put in figures than the love of Christ and the needs of humanity can be figured upon. Heart throbs and pulsations are not the measure of joy or distress. "The love of Christ constraineth me" principle of Paul cannot be expressed in numbers. The poverty of the soul without Christ cannot be put in statistical tables. To attempt either is to depreciate the one and materialize the other. Some one Christian's life work may be to win but one soul to Christ. It may be that that one, the product of a whole lifetime of effort perhaps by a whole church, will become the winner of a multitude. The great thing is to give the heart to the Savior and to follow where he leads, whether it be to the great throng or only to some isolated, weary, hungry soul.

to I am glad to think

I am not bound to make the wrong go right,

But only to discover and to do,

With cheerful heart, the work that God appoints.

—Jean Ingelow.